UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA Alexandria Division

IN RE:)	
)	
GORDON PROPERTIES, LLC and)	Case No. 09-18086-RGM
CONDOMINIUM SERVICES, INC.,)	(Jointly Administered)
)	Chapter 11
Debtors in Possession.)	
)	

EXAMINER'S MOTION FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF GORDON PROPERTIES, LLC IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONDUCT OF THE EXAMINER'S INVESTIGATION

Gordon Properties, LLC (the "Debtor") has accused the Examiner in this case of violating the Debtor's due process rights and engaging in improper *ex parte* communications with others. The Debtor has purported to reserve its rights with respect to the Examiner's allegedly improper actions, including objecting to the report of the Examiner and any request of the Examiner for compensation. In light of the extremely serious allegations lodged by the Debtor, the Examiner has no reasonable option, and indeed, is compelled, to seek urgent guidance of the Court as to whether he is, or is not, violating the Debtor's due process rights and engaging in wrongful *ex parte* communications.

In an effort to fulfill his responsibility to investigate and report to the Court with respect to the proposed Settlement Agreement between Gordon Properties, LLC and its affiliates on the one hand, and First Owners' Association of Forty Six Hundred Condominium, Inc. (the "FOA") on the other hand, the Examiner has scheduled investigative interviews with members of FOA's board of directors' first and second Special Litigation Committees (collectively, the "SLCs").

{LTB-00043668-} Stephen E. Leach (Va. Bar No. 20601) LEACH TRAVELL BRITT pc 8270 Greensboro Drive, Suite 700 Tysons Corner, Virginia 22102 (703) 584-8902 Because the SLC's were represented by counsel, the Examiner has agreed that counsel for the SLC's should attend the interviews. But because the interviews are just that – interviews, not depositions or examinations conducted under Bankruptcy Rule 2004 – the Examiner has not invited counsel for the Debtor (or anyone else) to attend. Likewise, the Examiner has tentatively arranged for an investigative interview of Bryan Sells as the representative of the Debtor. Because the Debtor is represented by counsel, the Examiner has asked Debtor's counsel to be present. But the Examiner has not invited counsel for FOA or anyone else to attend the interview with Mr. Sells.

The Debtors have told the Examiner that the latter's failure to have Debtor's counsel present during the Examiner's interview of members of the SLCs violates the Debtor's due process rights and turns the interviews into wrongful *ex parte* communications between the Examiner and another party. The Debtor's position on the Examiner's violation of the Debtor's due process rights is laid out in the "strings" of e-mail communications between and among Debtor's counsel, the Examiner, and others, attached hereto as Exhibits A-1 (beginning June 23, 2013 at 6:05 p.m. and concluding on June 24, 2013 at 9:01 a.m.); A-2 (beginning June 24, 2013 at 9:07 a.m. and concluding that day at 3:18 p.m.), and A-3 (June 25, 2013 at 3:16 p.m.)

The Examiner believes that it is entirely proper (and should be entirely non-controversial) for him to conduct investigative interviews without the presence of counsel for parties other than the person being interviewed. The Examiner is concerned that the presence of counsel for what has been an adversary may chill communications and degrade the quality of the investigation. This concern is particularly acute in this case because of the interlocking nature of the parties to the proposed Settlement Agreement, which is part of the rationale for the appointment of an examiner in the first place.

The Debtor has advised the Examiner that, notwithstanding the Examiner's purported violation of its due process rights, the Debtor has decided not to seek emergency relief from the Court. Instead, the Debtor has told the Examiner that it reserves its right to object to the Examiner's report (and the Examiner's compensation) based on the violation of the Debtor's due process rights. In effect, the Debtor has decided to put its due process complaints in its pocket, to be pulled out if it does not like what the Examiner says in his report and to form the basis for a challenge to the Examiner's compensation. The Debtor's wish to suspend the Sword of Damocles over the Examiner threatens to chill the Examiner's investigation with the spectre of future litigation and is wholly unnecessary because the Court can make a determination on this point now – either the Examiner's investigation will violate the Debtor's due process rights by engaging in wrongful *ex parte* communications or it will not. Accordingly, the Examiner has no reasonable choice but to ask the Court for guidance as to whether he is violating the Debtor's due process rights and engaging in improper communications when he interviews members of the SLCs without the presence of Debtor's counsel.

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¹ In the interests of full disclosure, the Examiner has had a lengthy "ex parte" interview with counsel for the FOA. Counsel for the Debtor was not given notice of this interview. Likewise, the Examiner has been contacted by, and spoken with, individual unit owners of the 4600 Condominium without notice to, or the participation of, counsel for either the Debtor or the FOA. The Examiner has also spoken with former counsel for the FOA without notice to, or the participation of, counsel for the Debtor or the FOA.

Wherefore, the Examiner prays that the Court determine whether the Examiner's interviews and conduct described above violate the Debtor's due process rights and constitute improper conduct.

Date: June 26, 2013 Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Stephen E. Leach

Stephen E. Leach (VA Bar No. 20601)

LEACH TRAVELL BRITT pc 8270 Greensboro Drive, Suite 700

McLean, Virginia 22102 Telephone: (703) 584-8902

Telecopier: (703) 584-8901 E-mail: sleach@ltblaw.com

Examiner

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that on the 26th day of June, 2013, I caused a copy of this Motion for Clarification to be served by via e-mail, upon the following:

John T. Donelon, Esquire 125 S. Royal Street Alexandria, VA 22314 donelanlaw@gmail.com

Joseph A. Guzinski, Esquire Office of the United States Trustee 115 S. Union Street, Room 210 Alexandria, VA 22314 joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov

Donald F. King, Esquire
James W. Reynolds, Esquire
Odin, Feldman & Pittleman
1775 Wiehle Avenue, Suite 400
Reston, VA 20190
donking@ofplaw.com
jim.reynolds@ofplaw.com

Jeremy Brian Root, Esquire Blankingship & Keith, P.C. 4020 University Drive, Suite 300 Fairfax, VA 22030 jroot@bklawva.com

/s/ Stephen E. Leach
Stephen E. Leach

EXHIBIT A-1

Steve Leach

From: King, Don <donking@ofplaw.com>
Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 9:01 AM

To: Steve Leach

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Leach Interviews

Steve, we reject your suggestion that you are authorized to conduct *ex parte* communications with parties and witnesses. We are happy to continue with the informal discovery plan we agreed upon with the court, but we expect to be noticed and provided an opportunity to attend the interviews. How can a party be expected to prepare for and respond to anticipated testimony when we have been kept in the dark. Please advise as to when you expect to interview Ms. Hernandez and Ms. Brungart. I will be in attendance. We do not intend to attend the interview of Mr. Reichenbach. Please let me know when you intend to interview Gordon Properties' representative. Mr. Donelan will be entitled to attend if he wishes. Regards, Don.



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: Steve Leach [mailto:sleach@ltblaw.com]

Sent: Sunday, June 23, 2013 9:43 PM

To: King, Don

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Leach Interviews

Don,

It never occurred to me (and I disagree) that Gordon Properties is entitled to have a representative present for an interview (not a deposition) of member of the FOA board or the SLC. John told me that he was going to inform you of

Case 09-18086-RGM Doc 620-1 Filed 06/26/13 Entered 06/26/13 15:57:11 Desc Exhibit(s) A-1 Page 3 of 4

my (unsurprising) plan to interview the members of the first and second SLC's. My response was that I do not control what he does. But it, likewise, had not occurred to me that I have any obligation to advise Gordon Properties of my effort to interview anyone other than a representative of Gordon Properties. In that regard, I would like to interview a representative of Gordon Properties on an entirely voluntary basis, but would like to schedule such an interview after I have interviewed the members of the SLC's. John is not invited to such an interview, nor do I intend to provide him with further notice thereof (beyond his receipt of this email).

Regards,

Steve

From: King, Don [mailto:donkinq@ofplaw.com]

Sent: Sunday, June 23, 2013 7:46 PM

To: Steve Leach **Cc:** Donelan, John

Subject: FW: Leach Interviews

Steve, I'm somewhat startled that you have chosen not to discuss this directly with me. Mr. Donelan is not my agent. In the first instance, I disagree with your position. We have agreed to be informal rather than requiring you to utilize normal discovery methods to conduct your investigation. Nonetheless, the debtors have not waived their rights and they do not accept that you have the authority to communicate *ex parte* with parties and witness. Having said that, it might be that we do not care about it in any event. I will let you know after speaking with my client whether he wishes that I be present for these interviews.

From: John T. Donelan [mailto:donelanlaw@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, June 23, 2013 6:05 PM

To: King, Don

Subject: Leach Interviews

Don,

Steve Leach and I are in the process of scheduling his interviews with members of the Special Litigation Committees.

He advised me that his position is that you are not entitled to be present. It is my understanding that you have not spoken to him about this matter.

After some reflection on this question, I do not believe that pushing the matter of your presence at the interviews of Martina, or any SLC Committee member, will benefit our joint goal to have the Settlement Agreement approved. Steve is concerned that the members of the SLC were bullied by Gordon Properties and Bryan Sells and I think that permitting him to examine the issues ordered by the court in a less confrontational matter, (without you present), may be beneficial to our clients.

John

Case 09-18086-RGM Doc 620-1 Filed 06/26/13 Entered 06/26/13 15:57:11 Desc Exhibit(s) A-1 Page 4 of 4

Law Office of John T. Donelan 125 South Royal Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Tel: <u>703-684-7555</u> Fax: <u>703-684-0981</u>



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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This email has been scanned by the Boundary Defense for Email Security System. visit http://www.apptix.com/email-security/antispam-virus	For more information please

EXHIBIT A-2

Steve Leach

From:

King, Don <donking@ofplaw.com>

Sent:

Monday, June 24, 2013 3:18 PM

To:

Steve Leach; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc:

'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject:

RE: Gordon Properties

And that is the essence of our due process objection.



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: Steve Leach [mailto:sleach@ltblaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 2:24 PM

To: King, Don; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc: 'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Don,

I don't know what anyone is going to say, but if I can't rely on information provided by an investigation, then there is no reason to conduct the investigation in the first place.

Steve

Case 09-18086-RGM Doc 620-2 Filed 06/26/13 Entered 06/26/13 15:57:11 Desc Exhibit(s) A-2 Page 3 of 9



Stephen E. Leach Partner sleach@ltblaw.com

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From: King, Don [mailto:donking@ofplaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 1:26 PM

To: Steve Leach; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc: 'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Sorry, that should have said "Steve."

Odin Feldman Pittleman x

Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: King, Don

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 1:14 PM

To: 'Steve Leach'; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc: 'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Leach, please confirm for me whether you believe you have the right to repeat what you are told by any party or witness in your report to the court or in any testimony you might give or evidence you might introduce. Regards, Don.

From: Steve Leach [mailto:sleach@ltblaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 11:43 AM **To:** King, Don; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc: 'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Don,

I would like to start tomorrow (after all, I am facing a July 18 deadline for a report to the court). But I have to work with both John Donelan's busy schedule and the interviewees' schedules. So I may not be able to start until next Monday.

I don't know how broad your objection to my investigation is, but I will voluntarily disclose that I have been approached by individual unit owners (who are not on the FOA board) with whom I have spoken and with whom I intend to continue to speak. I do not feel individual unit owners (as unit owners) are represented by John Donelan and see no need for him or anyone else to participate in those discussions. If you (or John) object to this conduct, add it to your objection to my interviews of the SLC members, etc.

Steve



Stephen E. Leach Partner sleach@ltblaw.com

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From: King, Don [mailto:donking@ofplaw.com]
Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 11:33 AM

To: Steve Leach; 'joseph.a.guzinski@usdoj.gov'

Cc: 'donelanlaw@gmail.com'; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: Re: Gordon Properties

Steve, please tell me when you intend to conduct your first "interview." Thank you, Don.



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: Steve Leach <sleach@ltblaw.com>

To: King, Don; Guzinski, Joe < joseph.a.quzinski@usdoj.gov >

Cc: Donelan, John <donelanlaw@gmail.com>; Marc Sarata <msarata@ltblaw.com>; Kristen Burgers

<kburgers@ltblaw.com>

Sent: Mon Jun 24 11:16:50 2013 **Subject**: RE: Gordon Properties

Don,

I do not need to convince Gordon Properties of what is self-evident.

If Gordan Properties can cite case law or court rules that forbid an examiner from conducting interviews without the presence of third parties (as distinct from depositions), I'll be more than happy to review that authority. Otherwise, I have told you how I plan to proceed.

Regards,

Steve

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From: King, Don [mailto:donking@ofplaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 10:04 AM

To: Steve Leach; Guzinski, Joe

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Steve, I'm prepared to be convinced of the correctness of your view. Can you cite me to any authority that allows you to conduct an examination of a party without notice to and opportunity to attend by another party?



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: Steve Leach [mailto:sleach@ltblaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 9:33 AM

To: King, Don; Guzinski, Joe

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Don,

I appreciate the parties' willingness to provide me with documents without formal document production requests, but I have to disagree that because the parties are willing to provide me with information informally, that I must treat a fact-finding interview as a deposition. No one is required to cooperate with me voluntarily and I have no intention of conducting formal discovery (if the parties don't care to cooperate with the examiner, that is their decision). But I have the right to conduct informal, investigative interviews without third parties present and will proceed to do so until and unless (a) the court tells me not to, or (b) no one is willing to cooperate with me by attending an interview.

Regards,

Steve



Stephen E. Leach Partner sleach@ltblaw.com

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From: King, Don [mailto:donking@ofplaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 9:27 AM

To: Steve Leach; Guzinski, Joe

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

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Steve, respectfully, the only reason it is an "interview" is because we have agreed to dispense with the rules of discovery and allow you to conduct informal discovery. If we were operating under normal discovery rules, you could not conduct an *ex parte* examination of a party simply by calling it an interview.



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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From: Steve Leach [mailto:sleach@ltblaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 9:16 AM

To: King, Don; Guzinski, Joe

Cc: Donelan, John; Marc Sarata; Kristen Burgers

Subject: RE: Gordon Properties

Joe,

I am happy to speak with you about this surprising issue. Of course I have the right to conduct interviews (not depositions) without counsel for Gordon Properties present.

Regards,

Steve



Stephen E. Leach Partner sleach@ltblaw.com

Leach Travell Britt pc 8270 Greensboro Drive Suite 700 Tysons Corner, Virginia 22102 Tel 703.584.8902 Cell 703.946.1365 Fax 703.584.8901 www.ltblaw.com

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From: King, Don [mailto:donking@ofplaw.com]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2013 9:07 AM

To: Guzinski, Joe

Cc: Steve Leach; Donelan, John **Subject:** Gordon Properties

Joe, I need your intervention with respect to the actions of the examiner appointed by the UST in this matter. You will recall that, at the request of the court, we agreed to informal discovery by the examiner. However, the examiner apparently has interpreted informal discovery to mean that he is entitled to undertake *ex parte* communications with parties and witnesses. The examiner will not allow the parties' counsel to be present during discussions with parties and witnesses. I am not aware of any basis for such actions, at least not without a court order authorizing such *ex parte* communications. We have requested that the examiner provide notice and an opportunity to be present to the parties at any interviews, but it does not appear that the examiner is inclined to do so. Your assistance is requested. Thank you, Don.



Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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EXHIBIT A-3

Case 09-18086-RGM Doc 620-3 Filed 06/26/13 Entered 06/26/13 15:57:11 Desc Exhibit(s) A-3 Page 2 of 2

Steve Leach

From: King, Don <donking@ofplaw.com>

Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2013 3:16 PM

To: Steve Leach

Cc: Guzinski, Joe; Donelan, John

Subject: Gordon Properties

Steve:

You have rejected the debtors' request that they be afforded their due process rights with respect to your examination of FOA's representatives. Although the debtors have elected not to seek emergency relief from the Court, the debtors nonetheless reserve all rights with respect to your actions, including, without limitation, objecting to your report and any request for compensation.

Regards, Don.

Odin Feldman Pittleman ∞

Donald King Attorney At Law donking@ofplaw.com Direct: 703-218-2116

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